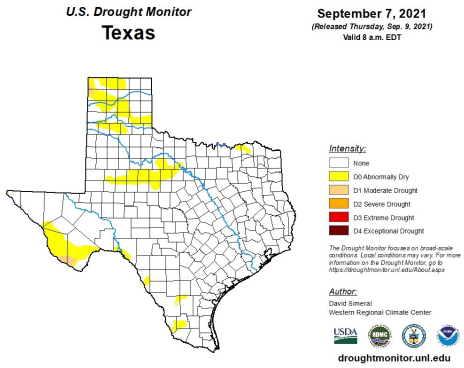
Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

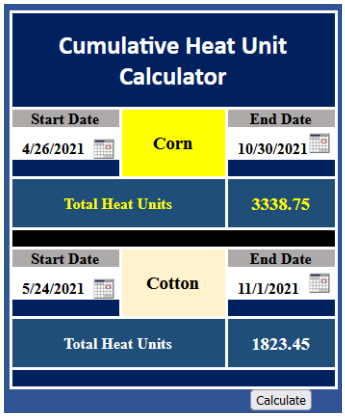
Plains Pest Management News

SEPTEMBER 10, 2021

General Status

Fields have been making great progress in the heat this week, even the late ones. As we moved through the week, we found more open bolls consistently and consistently fewer cotton insects until most of our cotton scouting was just making sure the fields were not at risk from the usual suspects and covering late agronomic needs. For all but a few cotton fields, harvest aids will be the next major consideration, and that concern is almost upon us already. There are still plenty of pest concerns in our late corn and sorghum fields as harvest is well underway for our earliest planted grain fields. Drought creeps back into our lives just as we start preparing for wheat planting and try to finish fields out.





THE OLD FARMER'S ALMANAC

Gardening » Frost Dates Calculator » Texas

FROST DATES FOR PLAINVIEW, TX

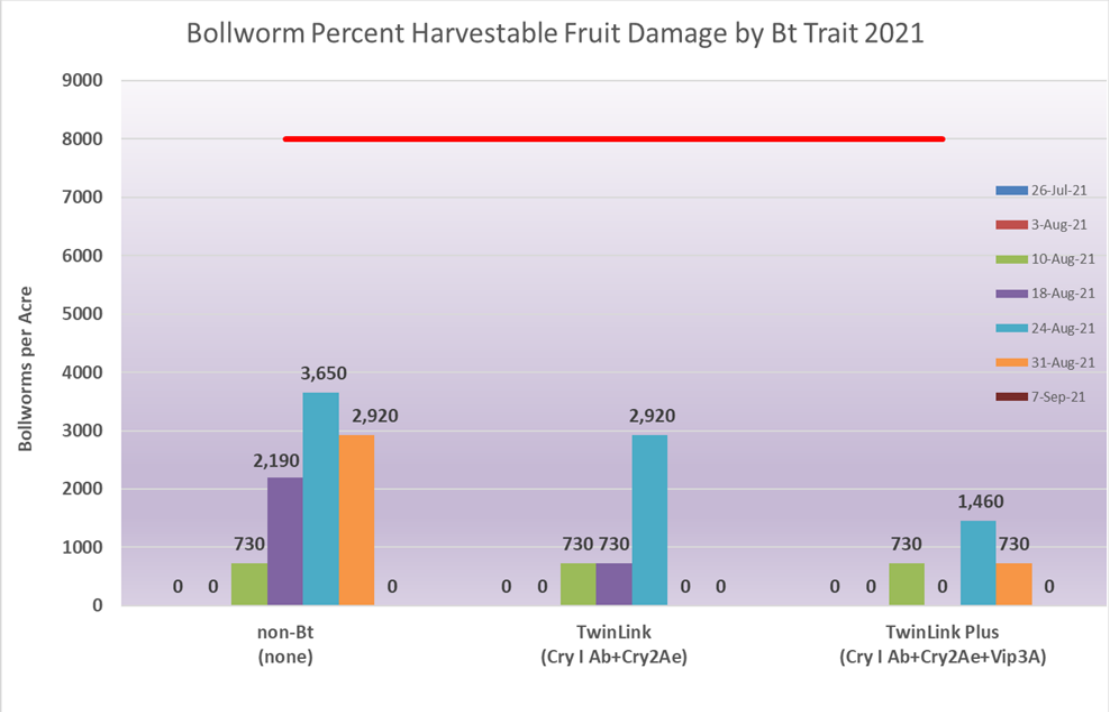
Nearest Climate Station	Altitude	Last Spring Frost	First Fall Frost	Growing Season
PLAINVIEW, TX	3369'	Apr 10	Oct 28	200 days

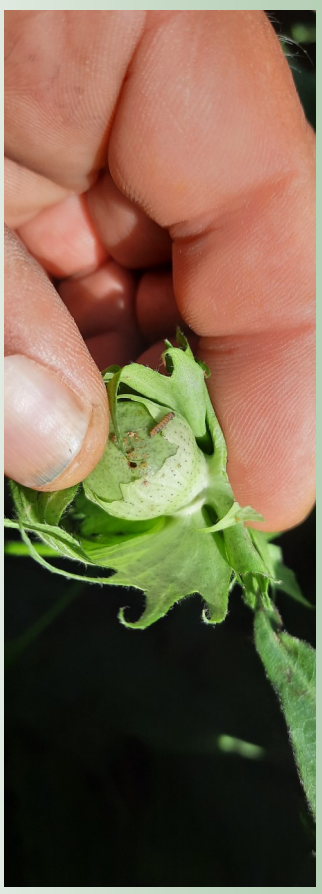
Last and first frost dates are 30% probability. Calculated using 1981-2010 Climate Normals.

Cotton

As of this week we only have a couple of really lush and rank fields that are not at absolute cut-out. These fields are a deep concern with an unknown freeze date looming. These fields were already pretty well-watered that had the misfortune of having locally heavy rainfall of 3-5 inches at inopportune time keeping them overly lush. Even though irrigation has been off for several weeks, these fields just will not shut down and will need special attention as we face harvest aid season right around the corner. Meanwhile just a few miles away we have dryland that is so dry that they are being turned into insurance as drought disasters that have not seen a drop since early July after getting off to a solid if not late wet start. On the whole, most of the fields that I felt would need special attention and conditioning to have any chance of being harvest ready in time look to be fine baring a very early freeze thanks to the conditions these past few weeks.

It has been almost a week since we found a bollworm egg or worms in our PPM cotton. There are also very few fields I feel worms or Lygus could damage from this point on. That being said, I am still noting eggs and young worms establishing in corn. There is a chance that on the lushest of cotton this next week, worms could establish on fruit that has little chance of making and develop into a large enough worm to damage harvestable fruit. I suggest if you have any field falling into this category, we continue to scout just to make sure.





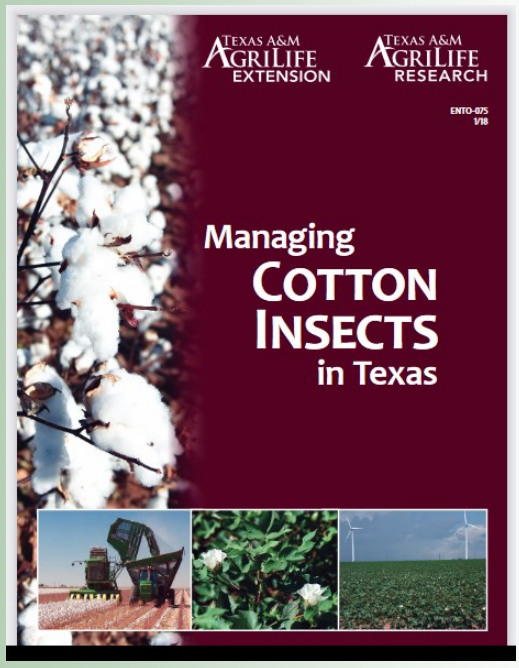
Our final data, in terms of bollworms per acre, from our BASF Bt Sentinel Plots tell the full story of bollworms this year. It was another light year with even the non-Bt plots not reaching ET. There were plenty of host crop distractions for the worms again this year. It also shows the danger in bollworms represent for all Bt technologies. All fields need to be scouted regardless of year despite some benefits to these extra technology controls.

While I feel worms and Lygus will not be bothering 90% or better of our cotton for the remainder of the year, I do intend to give a bit more scouting time devoted to pests this harvest aid season starting very soon. There are two reasons for this:

1. Stink bugs. The stink bug population in the area has been much higher than 'normal' in our area this year. While we have not treated any in the area I am aware of, these pests are highly mobile and have proven to congregate on older bolls causing either boll rot or hard lock. I intend to continue getting a few drop cloths and pay close attention to cotton during my first few weeks of harvest aid evaluations. If, for whatever reason, I feel any field is at risk for stink bugs, we will be initiating boll dissection to determine if the damage being caused will be economic. This scouting technique for stink bugs is common for our friends farther south where stink bugs are an annual issue and can be found on page 16 and 17 of our Managing Cotton Insect in Texas guide: https://agrilifecdn.tamu.edu/texaslocalproduce-2/files/2018/07/Managing-Cotton-Insects-in-Texas.pdf

2. Cotton aphids. Aphids are a potential pest in late season cotton from honey dew accumulation on cotton lint and open bolls. Our threshold is around 12 aphids per leaf. We have had an unusually high population for aphids over the last month considering there were few bollworm treatments made. This population was generally light with a few exceptions and has mostly been controlled until aphids are now hard to find. With cooler nights, late fertilizer applications made, and beneficials leaving fields for the next potential buffet, aphids could easily resurge.

Cotton Aphids from Hale County earlier this season.



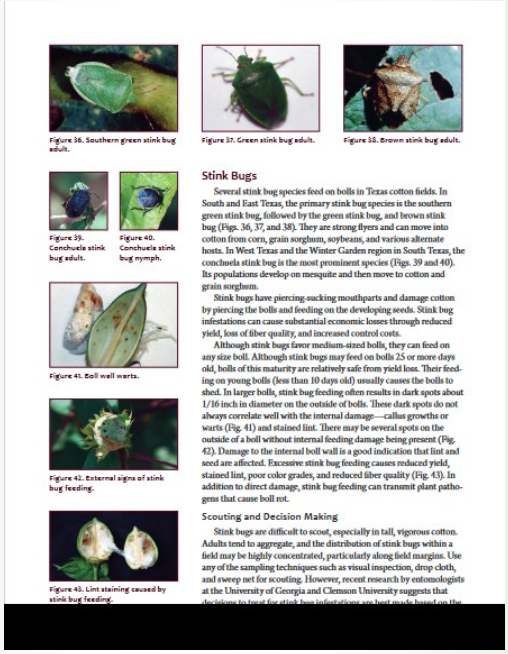


Figure 36. Southern green stink bug adult.

Figure 37. Green stink bug adult.

Figure 38. Brown stink bug adult.

Figure 39. Conchuela stink bug adult.

Figure 40. Conchuela stink bug nymph.

Figure 41. Boll wall warts.

Figure 42. External signs of stink bug feeding.

Figure 43. Lint staining caused by stink bug feeding.

Stink Bugs

Several stink bug species feed on bolls in Texas cotton fields. In South and East Texas, the primary stink bug species is the southern green stink bug, followed by the green stink bug, and brown stink bug (Figs. 36, 37, and 38). They are strong flyers and can move into cotton from corn, grain sorghum, soybeans, and various alternate hosts. In West Texas and the Winter Garden region in South Texas, the conchuela stink bug is the most prominent species (Figs. 39 and 40). Its populations develop on mesquite and then move to cotton and grain sorghum.

Stink bugs have piercing-sucking mouthparts and damage cotton by piercing the bolls and feeding on the developing seeds. Stink bug infestations can cause substantial economic losses through reduced yield, loss of fiber quality, and increased control costs.

Although stink bugs favor medium-sized bolls, they can feed on any size boll. Although stink bugs may feed on bolls 25 or more days old, bolls of this maturity are relatively safe from yield loss. Their feeding on young bolls (less than 10 days old) usually causes the bolls to shed. In larger bolls, stink bug feeding often results in dark spots about 1/16 inch in diameter on the outside of bolls. These dark spots do not always correlate well with the internal damage—callus growths or warts (Fig. 41) and stained lint. There may be several spots on the outside of a boll without internal feeding damage being present (Fig. 42). Damage to the internal boll wall is a good indication that lint and seed are affected. Excessive stink bug feeding causes reduced yield, stained lint, poor color grades, and reduced fiber quality (Fig. 43). In addition to direct damage, stink bug feeding can transmit plant pathogens that cause boll rot.

Scouting and Decision Making

Stink bugs are difficult to scout, especially in tall, vigorous cotton. Adults tend to aggregate, and the distribution of stink bugs within a field may be highly concentrated, particularly along field margins. Use any of the sampling techniques such as visual inspection, drop cloth, and sweep net for scouting. However, recent research by entomologists at the University of Georgia and Clemson University suggests that

Corn and Sorghum

Our oldest corn has been drying down for harvest for 2 weeks now while our youngest reached early dough this week. The oldest of our late planted corn should be seeing silage cutters moving their way as I write this. Disease, namely Southern rust, was again our largest concern this week. Over the weekend last week, several fields entering dent increased in disease coverage by jumping 20% higher from the previous 25% coverage last week. We could not allow this damage to increase, even this late in crop development and three fields were treated. In most of our other fields this, and other, corn diseases are harder to find. Spider mites are still in most fields, but seem to be loosing ground to beneficials and mite diseases. We did note some two-spotted mites moving in some fields in a few spots. These pests will generally move from top down, as opposed to the Banks grass mite that moves from lower leaves up. Other corn pests were very hard to spot this week.

Southern Rust from late last week that required treatment.

Our youngest PPM corn this week.

Our oldest sorghum is at black line and drying down for harvest while our youngest is just now in a very late bloom but we have fields in most stages in between. The sugarcane aphid populations still seem to be crashing in our fields and not returning. This does leave several of our sorghum fields as 'untreated' for the year. Headworms were very light in our sorghum fields this week as predators move up the plant from cleaning up treated or sub-ET SCA providing control and our limited worm populations seem more attracted to late corn. Midge are still an issue for any field still in bloom. Several of our latest fields were found with treatable populations of midge this week. Our highest midge population came in at 1.38 midge per head. Lygus are very common in our sorghum, especially once the grain starts to show color. Our best ET estimates hints show that there should be about 12 Lygus per head. Our highest fields came in at around 7 per head with most having less than 3. Stink bugs remain a common find, but also not near economic levels. Banks grass mites are in most fields, and moving up the plant, but this is most likely due to heat stress rather than damaging populations. Several of our lower input fields that are moving into hard dough are struggling in the heat. Some pockets, especially the pockets that once held higher SCAs, might be sacrificing some stalk integrity to finish out their grain. A light water investment in the high heat might be recommendable in these situations if possible.

Our youngest sorghum, still in bloom, required midge treatment this week.

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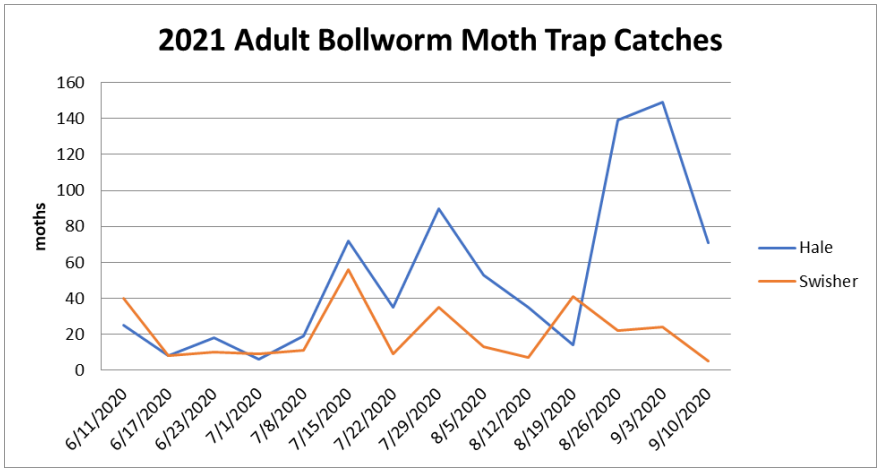

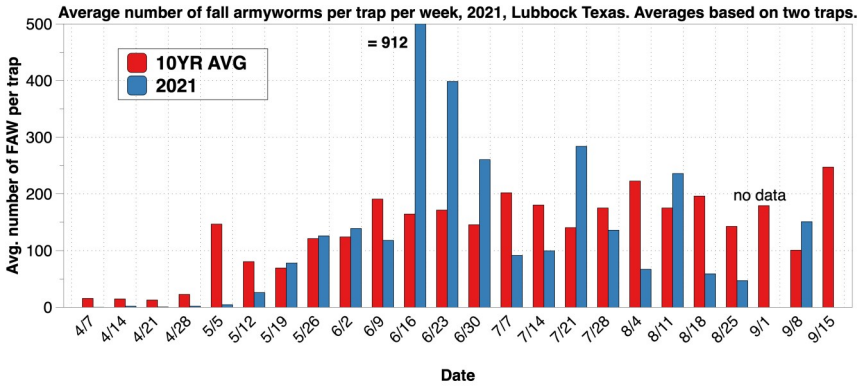

See you at the Hale, Swisher, Floyd Cotton Field Day!!!

September 22, 2021

Watch for details or Call 806-291-5267

Blayne Reed